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FAO's work with indigenous peoples in forestry

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FAO'S WORK WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN FORESTRY

Indigenous peoples manage approximately 28 percent of the world's land surface, including some of the most ecologically intact forest areas (Garnett *et al.*, 2018). They are the custodians of much of the remaining forest biodiversity (White & Martin, 2002) and are critical stakeholders in climate-change mitigation: over 20 percent of carbon stored in tropical forests lies within indigenous territories (Environmental Defense Fund & Woods Hole Research Center, 2015). Indigenous peoples' cultural identities, livelihoods and knowledge systems are integrally linked with their ancestral lands. Their traditional resource-management strategies are time-tested, and have an important role in sustaining species and ecosystem diversity across the globe. Yet indigenous peoples continue to struggle to defend their lands, forests and resource rights, in addition to fighting against persecution, marginalization and other forms of oppression (Global Witness, 2016). While indigenous peoples represent less than five percent of the global population, they suffer from disproportionately high levels of land insecurity, poverty and social dislocation.

FAO's Forestry Department has been working with indigenous peoples for many years to address the unique challenges they face, while assisting governments with the development of appropriate forestry policies that take indigenous peoples' land, resource rights and views into account. This approach is guided by FAO's Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (2010), the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UNSWAP, 2017) on Indigenous Peoples, and the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 (1989) among others. Consequently, FAO recognizes and respects the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in any project or programme intervention that might affect indigenous peoples or their territories.

In **Guyana** and **Honduras** FAO has worked closely with indigenous peoples' groups to develop and implement FPIC protocols, and to ensure indigenous peoples' meaningful participation in FPIC and decision-making processes.

Valuing indigenous knowledge of forests and food systems

Forests are critical for the survival of many indigenous peoples as the providers of food security and for enhancing livelihoods. Forests' resources include nutritious foods and medicines, household materials, and the income gained from selling forest products. FAO works to expand knowledge of forest assets at both national and local levels. Through global forums and publications FAO draws attention to the value of indigenous knowledge in sustainably managing diverse food systems and conserving traditional medicines.

FAO also provides legal and policy advice to governments to ensure that national development strategies and frameworks reflect the important contribution of forests to food security, nutrition and sustainable livelihoods. In addition, FAO advises on sustainable agroforestry practices and facilitates the establishment of small-scale forest enterprises and more equitable value chains to benefit indigenous peoples.

Collective tenure rights for indigenous lands

A growing number of indigenous communities are seeking legal recognition of their collective rights to tenure over their ancestral lands. This effort is crucial in forested areas in light of growing pressure from extractive industries, infrastructure development and agribusiness, as well as from conservation approaches where indigenous peoples are not equitably engaged. FAO's work on tenure, including with indigenous peoples, is guided by The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (2012). These guidelines promote the recognition of customary tenure of indigenous peoples and local communities, and provide a framework to improve the governance of land and forests.

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Supporting the role of indigenous peoples in climate change mitigation

The Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)[1], in developing countries, including the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks is one of the global mitigation efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

FAO seeks to ensure that indigenous men, women and youth have a voice in international and national dialogues on climate change, and that they are fairly compensated for their contributions to climate mitigation, including through sustainable land-use practices such as long-rotation shifting agriculture. FAO is also supporting on-the-ground monitoring of forests and carbon stocks by indigenous peoples.

In **Indonesia** and **Peru**, FAO and the Center for International Forestry Research have been working to strengthen indigenous communities' rights over their forest lands. The project works in partnership with indigenous organizations, universities and governments to support forest tenure reforms on indigenous lands through participatory approaches. These include conducting participatory research and sharing the findings through local-, regional- and national-level forums, dissemination of policy briefs and videos, and an educational radio programme. The project has also developed illustrated handbooks for communities to explain laws and policies related to collective land-titling processes. The project organized community training on procedures to formalize collective rights, on gender equity in the formalization of community lands, and on climate change and forest management.

[1] The aim of REDD+ is to encourage developing countries to contribute to climate change mitigation efforts by: i) reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by slowing, halting and reversing forest loss and degradation; and ii) increasing removal of GHGs from the earth's atmosphere through the conservation, management and expansion of forests.

In **Colombia**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Guatemala**, **Honduras**, **Panama** and **Paraguay**, FAO supports forest and land monitoring by indigenous and local communities through the use of drones, image processing, high-resolution mapping and the gathering and analysis of field data. This initiative increases engagement in the sustainable management of indigenous territories and community-based forest governance. Achievements include the delineation of territorial boundaries and the development of land-management plans. In Panama, the activities have paved the way for recognition of the ownership rights to the territories of the Embera-Wounaan people in Aruza.

Facilitating sustainable forest management and improved livelihoods

Effective governance systems along with strengthened human and institutional capacities are needed to protect and ensure more responsive and productive sustainable management of forest resources by local communities and indigenous peoples.

FAO works to promote the engagement of indigenous peoples in forest-management processes. It supports institutional strengthening at national and subnational levels by encouraging sustainable forest management. In addition, FAO provides technical expertise to address capacity gaps and to encourage dialogue on forests, forest inventories and policy legal assessment and formulation, in ways that engage with and benefit indigenous peoples.

Promoting indigenous peoples' rights to manage and conserve wildlife

FAO supports indigenous peoples and local communities in the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife as a key enabling condition for maintaining biodiversity and ensuring sustainable rural livelihoods and food security. The Organization has developed a community-rights-based approach to ensure that design, implementation and monitoring of wildlife management programmes consider and respect the rights of those affected. The approach addresses indigenous peoples' needs, governance systems and capacities, while ensuring the implementation of FPIC and the protection of their intellectual property rights and cultural identities.

From its secretariat at FAO headquarters, the **Mountain Partnership (MP) Products Initiative** works to promote high-value mountain products as a means to develop mountain economies and improve the livelihoods of many indigenous peoples. This initiative focuses on native-crop varieties cultivated by small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples in remote mountain areas. The MP and the organization Slow Food have jointly developed a voluntary product labelling scheme currently operational in seven countries. In addition, FAO and partners have developed a map of indigenous peoples and local communities living in mountain areas. This map provides online users with visual cues to a growing database on mountain and indigenous peoples around the world, including information on their locations, populations and food systems.

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In **Nepal**, FAO through Phase II of the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) will support the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), a national organization that represents the 59 indigenous nationalities or peoples recognized by the Government of Nepal. This will be done in close coordination with The Federation for Community Forestry User Group. NEFIN has a seat on the national advisory committee of FFF Nepal.

In **Ecuador** and **the Plurinational State of Bolivia**, FFF is providing direct support to 11 indigenous peoples organizations in the Amazonian region of both countries to develop culturally appropriate enterprises, access value chains for a range of traditional products and to develop integrated forest and land management plans that are climate resilient.

In **Cameroon**, the **Central African Republic** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, FAO is working with the Forest Stewardship Council to convene representatives of indigenous peoples to form part of an expert group, and to equip members with the tools and knowledge they need to negotiate and resolve conflicts with private forest concessionaires operating within indigenous peoples' territories.

For further information consult:

FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples:www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/FAO_policy.pdf

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security: www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf

Free Prior and Informed Consent: An indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities: Manual for Project Practitioners: www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/5202ca4e-e27e-4afa-84e2-b08f8181e8c9/

For more information, please visit the FAO webpages: www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/en/ and www.fao.org/forestry/en

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